(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) Pub. No.: **US 2019/0091577 A1**

Reiche, III et al. (43) **Pub. Date:** **Mar. 28, 2019**

(54) **METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR INCENTIVIZING TEAM COOPERATION IN MULTIPLAYER GAMING ENVIRONMENTS**

(71) Applicant: **Activision Publishing, Inc.**, Santa Monica, CA (US)

(72) Inventors: **Paul Reiche, III**, Novato, CA (US); **Robert F. Ford**, Novato, CA (US); **Adrian M. Ledda**, San Francisco, CA (US); **Paul D. Yan**, Novato, CA (US); **Daniel J. Neil**, San Francisco, CA (US); **Michael D. Ebert**, Petaluma, CA (US); **Avery Lodato**, San Rafael, CA (US)
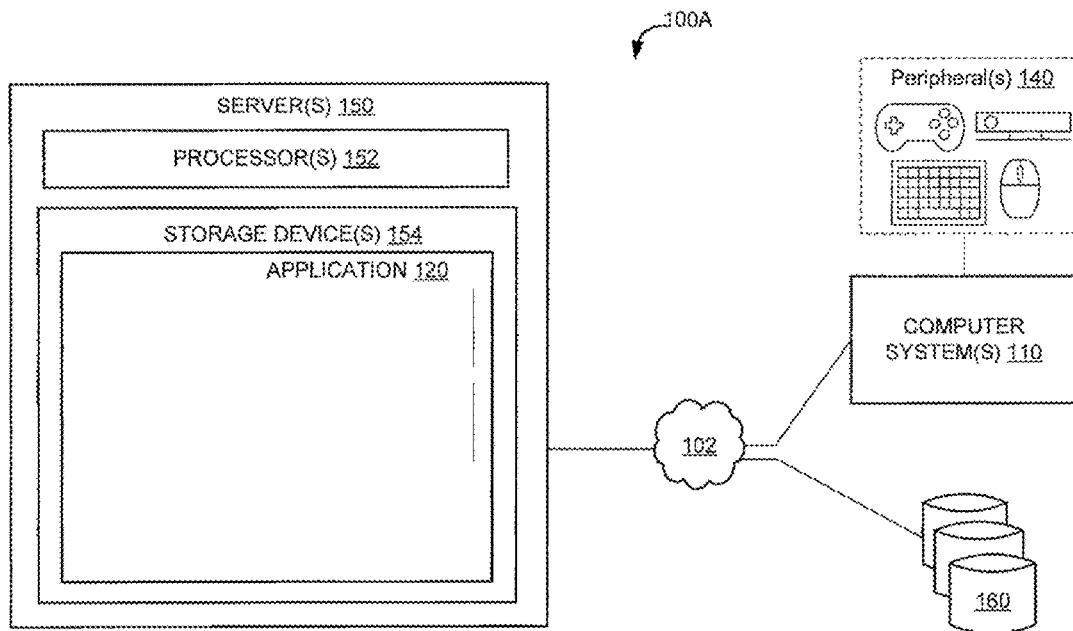
Publication Classification

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Computer-implemented methods and systems for simulating a multiplayer game environment to allow players of different skill levels to concurrently play the same level of a gaming session, to encourage and incentivize cooperative team behavior, to match players based on subjective variables, such as likeability and a general fun factor, and to tailor gaming content based on the social group itself.

100A

Peripheral(s) 140

COMPUTER SYSTEM(S) 110

160

102

SERVER(S) 150

PROCESSOR(S) 152

STORAGE DEVICE(S) 154

APPLICATION 120

FIG. 1A

100B

SERVER(S) 150

160

102

Peripheral(s) 140

COMPUTER SYSTEM 110

PROCESSOR(S) 112

STORAGE DEVICE(S) 114

APPLICATION 120

FIG. 1B

FIG. 2B

FIG. 2C

FIG. 2A

302

Acquire skill-level data of each player

304

Modify one or more parameters of the game session

306

Present data to each player via game console

FIG. 3A

Table 1

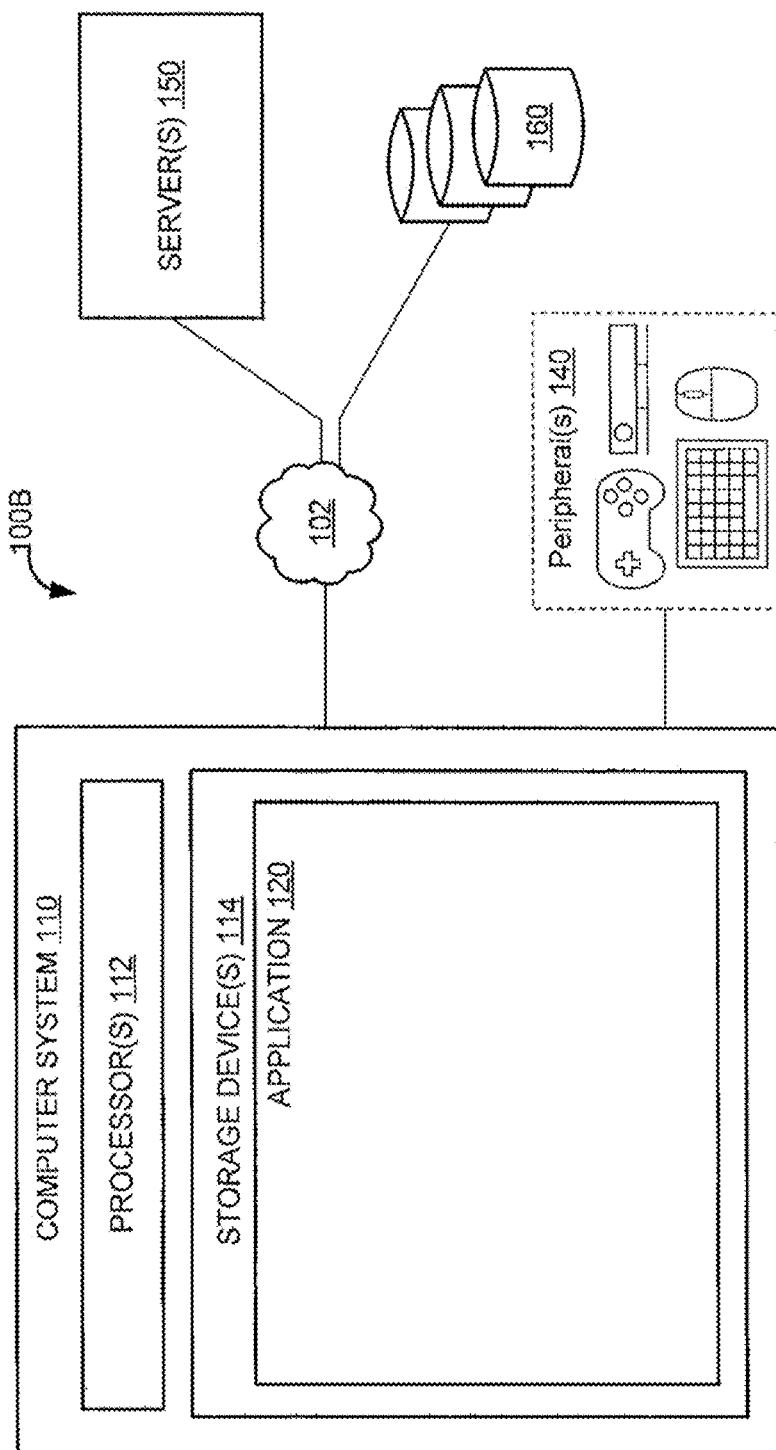| Modifiable Parameters	High Skill Level	Medium Skill Level	Low Skill Level
degree of accuracy required to hit a target	High	Medium	Low
Likelihood of being targeted by enemy	High	Medium	Low
Difficulty of an in-game puzzle	High	Medium	Low
Bonus chance of finding powerful treasure	Medium	High	Very High
Number of challenging enemies in a single encounter	10-20	5-10	1-5
Gold earned multiplier	x1.5	x1.25	x1.0
Friendly-fire damage amount to teammates	100% of damage	50% of damage	None

FIG. 3B

Table 2

Topic	Modification to High Skill Level Players	Modification to Low Skill Level Players
Equipment selection	Access to numerous, complex equipment	Access to fewer, simplified equipment
Accuracy of enemy attacks	Enemies attacks never miss the player	Enemies attacks sometimes miss the player
Accuracy of player attacks	Player attacks need to be precise to hit the enemy	Player attacks have a generous leeway and do not need great precision to hit the enemy
Chance to find bonus treasure	80% chance on session completion	35% chance on session completion
Frequency of hints given to player in a session	No hints given	Hints are always given
Customization options	Wide range of unique ways to customize character appearance	Limited range of ways to customize character appearance

318   320   322

FIG. 3C

352

Acquire skill-level data of each player

354

Aggregate skill-level data of all players

356

Modify one or more parameters of the game session

358

Present customized data to all players via game console

FIG. 3D

402

Determine cooperation metric for each player individually

404

Assess overall team metric for mutual cooperation by all players in the team

406

Generate visual representation of team performance

FIG. 4A

Table 3

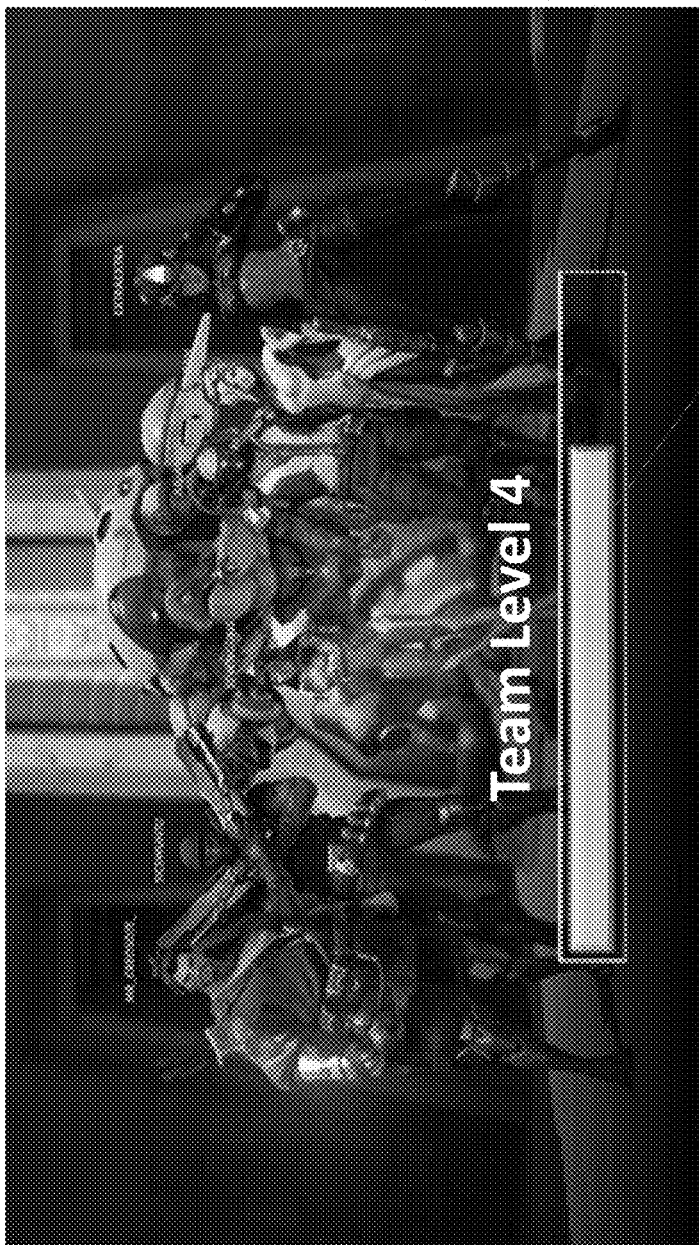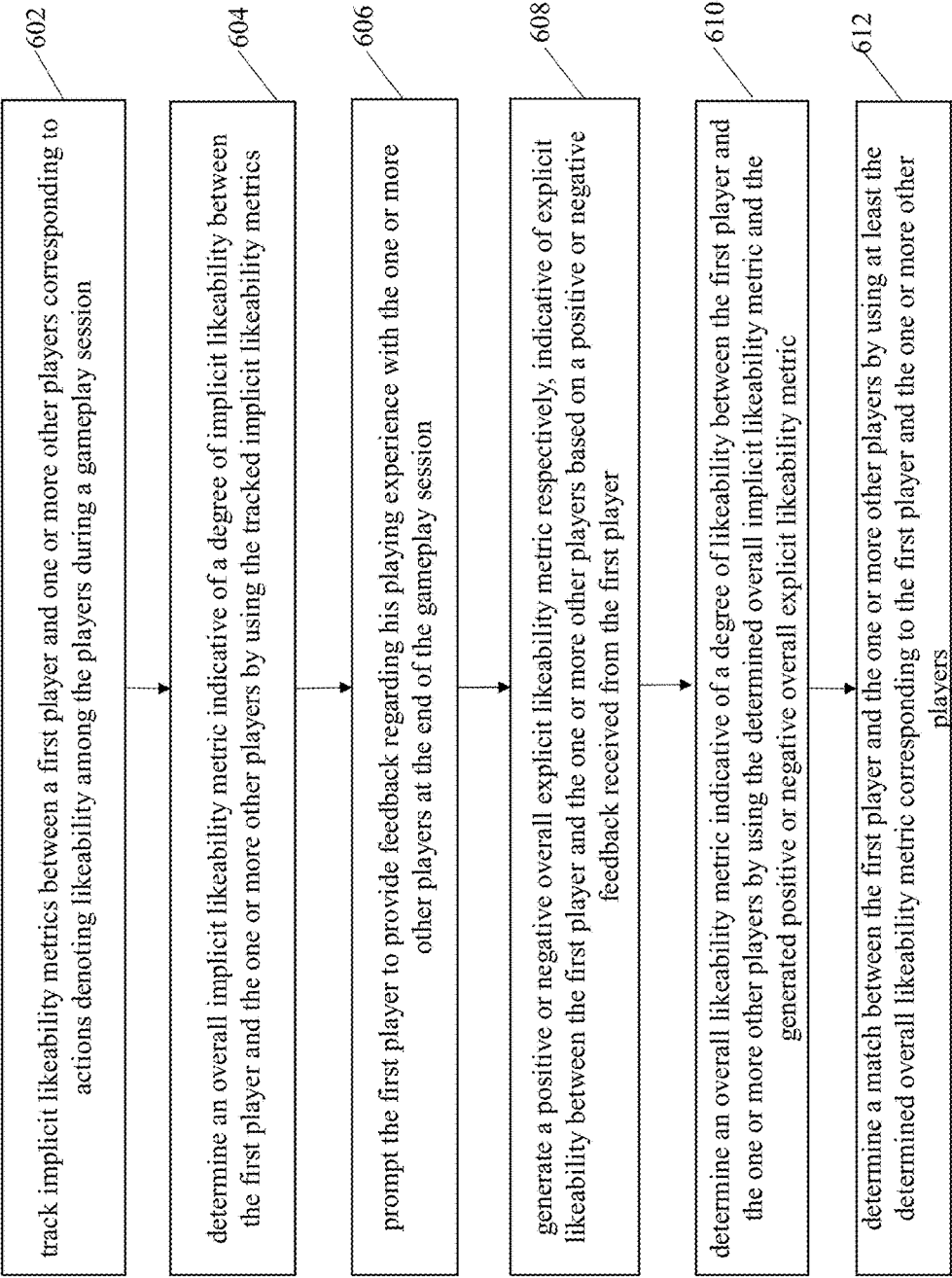| Actions	Status of Cooperative Actions performed	Cooperation Metric
Healing another player	Yes	+5
Sharing weapon	No	0
Saving a team member's life	Yes	+25
Killing a team member	Yes	-50
Several teammates contributed to defeating an enemy	Yes	+15 per member involved
Activating a coordinated team combo attack	Yes	+40
Completing level objectives alone	No	0
Completing level objectives with teammates	Yes	+10
Complimenting, praising, or positive gestures to other teammates	Yes	+5

410   412   414

FIG. 4B

Team Level 4

500

FIG. 5

track implicit likeability metrics between a first player and one or more other players corresponding to actions denoting likeability among the players during a gameplay session

602

determine an overall implicit likeability metric indicative of a degree of implicit likeability between the first player and the one or more other players by using the tracked implicit likeability metrics

604

prompt the first player to provide feedback regarding his playing experience with the one or more other players at the end of the gameplay session

606

generate a positive or negative overall explicit likeability metric respectively, indicative of explicit likeability between the first player and the one or more other players based on a positive or negative feedback received from the first player

608

determine an overall likeability metric indicative of a degree of likeability between the first player and the one or more other players by using the determined overall implicit likeability metric and the generated positive or negative overall explicit likeability metric

610

determine a match between the first player and the one or more other players by using at least the determined overall likeability metric corresponding to the first player and the one or more other players

612

FIG. 6A

Table 4

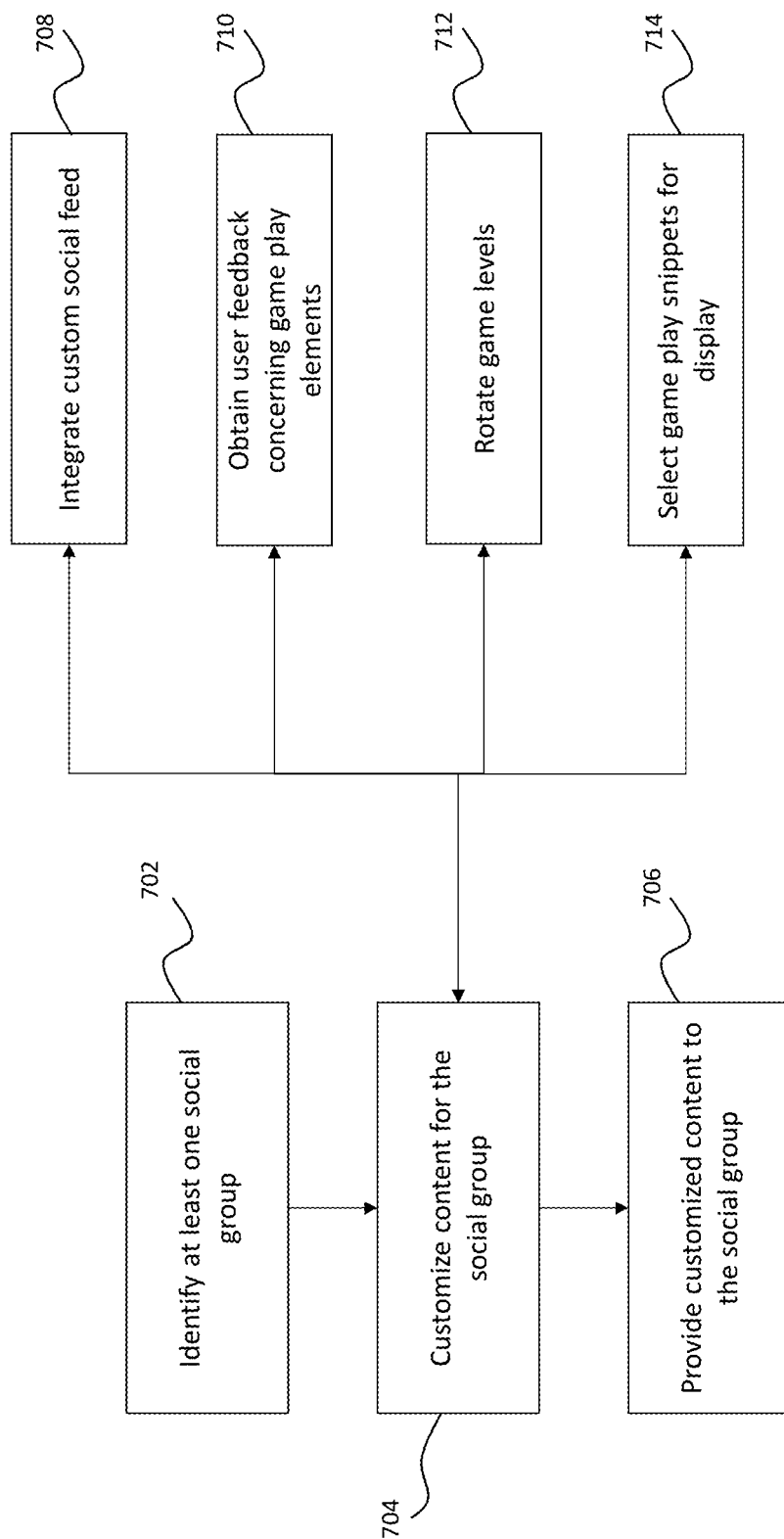| Actions of Players	Implicit Likability Metric with Player 2	Implicit Likability Metric with Player 1
quitting a gameplay session before finishing the session	0	0
positive chatting with player 2 during the gameplay session	1	0
co-operating with both players during the gameplay session	1	1
engaging in celebratory behavior with both the other players during and/or after the gameplay session	1	1

620   622   624

FIG. 6B

Integrate custom social feed — 708

Obtain user feedback concerning game play elements — 710

Rotate game levels — 712

Select game play snippets for display — 714

Identify at least one social group — 702

Customize content for the social group — 704

Provide customized content to the social group — 706

FIG. 7A

Table 5

User Context	Modification to Gameplay
Members are playing the same level repeatedly	Incentivize a new level by providing special rewards on completion of new level
One member earns a new, rare special weapon and posts about it	All other members now have a higher probability of receiving this same weapon
Members repeatedly fail a particular mission, and complain about it in messages	The mission becomes offered at a lower difficulty, with slightly reduced rewards.
Software notices that Member A and Member B do not play many games together	Software offers in-game incentives to encourage Member A and Member B to play a game together, and earn a unique reward.
Software presents a survey to a group, and members vote on their favorite type of weapon	The most-voted weapon becomes more likely to appear as a reward for all group members.
A member shares a particularly challenging in-game achievement	Software issues challenges to all members and offers rewards to players who can match or exceed the same challenge.

730

732

FIG. 7B

METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR INCENTIVIZING TEAM COOPERATION IN MULTIPLAYER GAMING ENVIRONMENTS

FIELD

[0001] The present specification discloses systems and methods for improving multiplayer gaming environments. More specifically, the present specification is related to improving player matching, generating content derived from, or based on, social networks, customizing content to a player's skill level, and incentivizing cooperative team behavior within online multiplayer gaming environments.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Online gaming platforms enable social interactions between players who may or may not be known to each other. Multiplayer gaming environments often enable players to form teams and therefore foster virtual interaction while they play in the same gaming environment at the same time. Individuals can form partnerships and participate in play against the system via pre-programmed challenges and/or against another team of individuals, thereby allowing for either cooperative or competitive play. Each gameplay session may be played with either the same or a different group of matched players.

[0003] Typically, when a player logs into an online multiplayer gaming environment, the player may engage in a gameplay session in which he or she is matched, based on skill, with other players to play together on the same team or as opponents. A given player may engage in multiple gameplay sessions during a login session. In addition, each gameplay session may be played with either the same or a different group of players that are compatible with their individual skill levels. Conventionally, when interested in playing in a group with other players, an individual player may ask other players who are of the same skill level to form a player group. The player may also study profiles of other players and invite them to play together. There are often times when players invite their friends to play together in a game. However, friends may or may not be familiar with the specific game and/or gaming levels within the specific game to which they have been invited. Alternatively, some friends may be familiar with the game but may have different comfort levels and/or levels of proficiency at playing the game. While some players enjoy playing videogames interactively with friends, these differences in skill set, experience or proficiency at a game and/or certain levels within the game may prevent them from playing with the people they would most enjoy playing with.

[0004] There is thus a need for a gaming environment that enables players of different skill levels to play together, while still providing players at the various different skill levels the appropriate amount of challenge for their given skill level, thereby avoiding having lower skilled players be overwhelmed or higher skilled players be bored. A gaming environment is needed that enables players within the same team to experience a different degree of difficulty or challenge while participating in the same gameplay session on the same game level.

[0005] With respect to team formation or opponent matching itself, different types of matchmaking processes are utilized to connect players for online gaming sessions. Most processes attempt to match based on complimentary gaming skills. Examples of matchmaking elements used may include game profile, player profile, prior match scores, and prior quality scores. Conventionally, when interested in playing in a group with other players, an individual player may ask friends to form a player group, may ask other players who are of the same skill level to form a player group, and/or may otherwise form a group by sending invitations to other players. Some systems may automatically group or match players based solely on a limited number of hard-coded characteristics (e.g., skill level), which are not dynamically adjusted. Such systems may create sets of rigidly segregated pools of players. For example, in some conventional systems, a player who is at a lower skill level may never be matched with a player at a higher skill level, which may result in one dimensional and unsatisfying gameplay. Additionally, prospectively enjoyable gaming partnerships may not be formed between players of different skills due to these pre-defined criteria for matching players. Thus, there is also a need for methods and systems that enable players in a multiplayer gaming environment to play together effectively based on subjective variables, such as a degree of likeability or a fun factor between the players. There is also a need to incorporate stronger social elements in multiplayer games.

[0006] Once a team is formed, it would be preferable to encourage and incentivize cooperation among teammates. Such cooperation increases the satisfaction among players and typically results in improved performance. However, conventional gaming environments do not recognize, or quantify, cooperation between team players. Therefore, players are unable to track whether they are taking steps to improve their cooperation and fail to identify, or pay attention to, opportunities to behave cooperatively. Therefore, there is also a need for a gaming environment to recognize team cooperation and encourage cordial team performance through quantified metrics and visual representations thereof.

[0007] Some gaming environments allow players to interact with each other, and virtual characters, via social networking platforms. These platforms provide a virtual space to connect with other players with common interests and profiles related to certain gaming environments, are used by the players to discuss their gaming activities and experiences, and often provide a way for players to offer suggestions and feedback that could improve their gaming experiences. Frequently, groups of players, who are connected with each other over a social network and who often play together, have different suggestions and desires for what they wish to see in the gaming environment, and these suggestions and desires may vary greatly between players' various social groups, which have different interests, discussions, suggestions and feedback. While these varied social groups are rich in ideas and content suggestions, conventional gaming systems are unable to efficiently collect and utilize this feedback from each social group to generate different, tailored gaming environments. Therefore, there is also a need for a gaming system and environment that may identify players and/or player groups active over a social network, monitor and track content suggestions made within the social group, and dynamically modify the gaming parameters for that player or group of players within the tracked social group, based on their activities, suggestions, feedback, or other information provided within the social network.

SUMMARY

[0008] The following embodiments and aspects thereof are described and illustrated in conjunction with systems, tools and methods, which are meant to be exemplary and illustrative, not limiting in scope.

[0009] In some embodiments, the present specification discloses a computer-implemented method for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, the method being implemented in a computer having a processor and a random access memory, wherein the processor is in data communication with a display and with a storage unit, the method comprising: determining, by the computer, a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; assessing, by the computer, an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, based on the measure of the degree of cooperation provided by each player; and generating, by the computer, a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

[0010] Optionally, the determining comprises determining a degree of at least one of: items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game, and cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

[0011] Optionally, the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team. Optionally, the rewarding comprises providing at least one of bonus points, additional weapons, and game benefits, to the team.

[0012] In some embodiments, the present specification discloses a system for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, the system comprising: a computer having a processor and a random access memory, wherein the processor is in data communication with a display and with a storage unit, the computer configured to: determining a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; assessing an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, based on the measure of the degree of cooperation provided by each player; and generating a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

[0013] Optionally, the determining comprises determining a degree of at least one of: items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game, and cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

[0014] Optionally, the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team. Optionally, the rewarding comprises providing at least one of bonus points, additional weapons, and game benefits, to the team.

[0015] In some embodiments, the present specification discloses a computer readable non-transitory medium comprising a plurality of executable programmatic instructions wherein, when said plurality of executable programmatic instructions are executed by a processor, a process for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, is performed, said plurality of executable programmatic instructions comprising: programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for determining a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for assessing an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, based on the measure of the degree of cooperation provided by each player; and programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for generating a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

[0016] Optionally, the determining comprises determining a degree of at least one of: items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game, cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game, and cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

[0017] Optionally, the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team.

[0018] The aforementioned and other embodiments of the present specification shall be described in greater depth in the drawings and detailed description provided below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] These and other features and advantages of the present specification will be appreciated, as they become better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0020] FIG. 1A is a block diagram of a system for providing multiplayer video games, according to one implementation of the present specification;

[0021] FIG. 1B is a block diagram of another system for providing multiplayer video games, according to one implementation of the present specification;

[0022] FIG. 2A illustrates an exemplary system configuration in which a server hosts a plurality of computer devices to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification;

[0023] FIG. 2B illustrates an exemplary system configuration in which a plurality of computer systems are networked together to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification;

[0024] FIG. 2C illustrates an exemplary system configuration in which a computer system is used by a plurality of users to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification;

[0025] FIG. 3A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a player's skill level and modifying a degree of

difficulty of a gameplay session based on the acquired skill level, in accordance with an implementation of the present specification;

[0026] FIG. 3B is a table providing an exemplary list of parameters of a gameplay session that are modified based on a player's skill level and the corresponding experience for players of different skill levels;

[0027] FIG. 3C is a table providing an exemplary list of parameters of a gameplay session that are modified differently for different experiences by players based on a player's skill level;

[0028] FIG. 3D is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a player's skill level and modifying a degree of difficulty of a gameplay session based on the acquired skill level, in accordance with another implementation of the present specification;

[0029] FIG. 4A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of encouraging cooperation between players of a team, who play together during a gaming session containing one or more levels;

[0030] FIG. 4B is a table providing an exemplary list of actions that may be performed by players of a team during a game play session and the corresponding cooperation metrics associated with each of the actions;

[0031] FIG. 5 is a screenshot displaying an overall team metric in the form of a meter or bar;

[0032] FIG. 6A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a match between two or more players based on their explicit and implicit likeability metrics tracked throughout a game play session, in accordance with an implementation of the present specification;

[0033] FIG. 6B is a table providing a list of exemplary player actions during a gameplay session that may be used for determining likeability metrics with respect to at least one other player;

[0034] FIG. 7A is a flow diagram describing a method for implementing gaming social networks in accordance with some implementations of the present specification; and

[0035] FIG. 7B is a table providing a list of exemplary user feedback during or after a gameplay session that may be used for modifying one or more gaming levels.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0036] The present specification relates to dynamically adjusting a gaming environment in real time in order to improve matchmaking systems and methods that facilitate optimization of player matches for multiplayer video games, as well as facilitate friendly social interaction during and after game play. In embodiments of the present specification, the gaming environment may include gaming parameters, display parameters, and parameters related to social media for the players of a game. The systems and methods of the present specification may continually tune the gaming environment and its various parameters based on observations of player behavior, gameplay quality, gaming experiences of individuals as well as a group of players who play together, suggestions from social groups of players, and/or other information.

[0037] The present specification is directed towards multiple embodiments. The following disclosure is provided in order to enable a person having ordinary skill in the art to practice the invention. Language used in this specification should not be interpreted as a general disavowal of any one specific embodiment or used to limit the claims beyond the meaning of the terms used therein. The general principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments and applications without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Also, the terminology and phraseology used is for the purpose of describing exemplary embodiments and should not be considered limiting. Thus, the present invention is to be accorded the widest scope encompassing numerous alternatives, modifications and equivalents consistent with the principles and features disclosed. For purpose of clarity, details relating to technical material that is known in the technical fields related to the invention have not been described in detail so as not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

[0038] In the description and claims of the application, each of the words "comprise" "include" and "have", and forms thereof, are not necessarily limited to members in a list with which the words may be associated.

[0039] It should be noted herein that any feature or component described in association with a specific embodiment may be used and implemented with any other embodiment unless clearly indicated otherwise.

[0040] It should be appreciated that the programmatic methods described herein may be performed on any computing device, including a laptop, desktop, smartphone, tablet computer, specialized gaming console, or virtual reality system. The computing device comprises at least one processor and a nonvolatile memory that stores the programmatic instructions which, when executed by the processor, perform the methods or steps disclosed herein, including the generation of a graphical user interface that is communicated to a local or remote display. The computing device is in communication with at least one remotely located server through a network of any type.

[0041] The embodiments disclosed herein are directed to an improvement in computer-related technology (enabling computers to enable improved gaming experiences in an online multiplayer gaming environment), and thus do not recite abstract ideas or concepts. The improved computing gaming experiences are achieved through the use of specific rules to collect and evaluate player data within the gaming environment which, when executed, enable the automation of specific content generation, player matching, and other gaming experiences that previously were not available or could not be automated. These new computer gaming rules improve existing technological processes in gaming and, therefore, are not abstract or conceptual in nature. This specification therefore teaches how the disclosed inventions improve a gaming technology using a specific set of rules, and particular solutions to the aforementioned failures in conventional gaming systems to achieve the desired outcomes.

[0042] While aspects of the present specification may be described herein with reference to various game levels or modes, characters, roles, game items, etc. associated with a First-Person-Shooter (FPS) game, it should be appreciated that any such examples are for illustrative purposes only, and are not intended to be limiting. The matchmaking system and method described in detail herein may be used in any genre of multiplayer video game, without limitation.

[0043] The terminology used within this specification and detailed description of the various embodiments is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to limit the invention.

[0044] As used herein, the term "a degree of" may be construed to mean a measure calculated by a processing device to a certain parameter, and used to assist in inferring an extent of that parameter.

[0045] The terms "skill level" and "skill level data" may be construed to mean a relative measure or a statistic and/or associated data used to arrive at the measure or statistic, established by a processor, which is used to determine an ability of a player in playing a game, when compared to other players and/or when compared to the ability of an expert or reference player.

[0046] The term "modifying parameters of a game session" may be construed to mean a technical process of using a processor to change data entries which are used by the processor of a gaming console or gaming server in the process of programmatically generating one or more levels of a gameplay session.

[0047] The term "a degree of difficulty or challenge" may be construed to mean a technical process of using a processor to select, by a player, the technical difficulty of performing a task such as playing a game in order to achieve a score in the game.

[0048] The term "common level in a game session" may be construed to mean a portion of a game that is commonly presented by the processor of a gaming console or gaming server to all the players who are playing the game together and simultaneously.

[0049] The term "explicit indicator of likeability between a first player and a second player" may refer to data determined by a processor of a gaming console or gaming server from data provided by a first player towards a second player, which indicates that the first player likes or is favorable toward the second player or vice versa.

[0050] The term "implicit indicator of likeability between a first player and a second player" may refer to data determined by a processor of a gaming console or gaming server interpreted from one or more data sets collected by the processor from the actions of a first player towards a second player, which indicate that the first player likes or is favorable to the second player or vice versa.

[0051] The term "a level of cooperation between a first player and a second player" may be construed to mean an extent of assistance provided by the two players to each other through one or more actions that are directed towards achieving a common or mutual benefit during a gaming session where the two players are playing together and/or simultaneously.

[0052] The term "celebratory actions" may be construed to mean one or more data points in the form of graphics, text, or voice, that may be used to acknowledge enjoyment or achievement of an event during or after a gaming session by one or more players engaged in that gaming session.

[0053] The term "positive or negative chatting between a first player and a second player" may be construed to mean data exchanged between the first and the second players towards each other that may be in the form of text, graphics, and/or voice, and that are indicative of either a favorable or a cynical viewpoint directed from one player to the other.

[0054] The term "a multiplayer game environment" or "massively multiplayer online game" may be construed to mean a specific hardware architecture in which one or more servers electronically communicate with, and concurrently support game interactions with, a plurality of client devices, thereby enabling each of the client devices to simultaneously play in the same instance of the same game. Preferably the plurality of client devices number in the dozens, preferably hundreds, preferably thousands. In one embodiment, the number of concurrently supported client devices ranges from 10 to 5,000,000 and every whole number increment or range therein. Accordingly, a multiplayer game environment or massively multiplayer online game is a computer-related technology, a non-generic technological environment, and should not be abstractly considered a generic method of organizing human activity divorced from its specific technology environment.

Exemplary System Architecture

[0055] FIGS. 1A and 1B illustrate systems for providing multiplayer video games, according to some implementations of the present specification, referred to as a multiplayer game environment or multiplayer gaming environment. FIG. 1A illustrates an implementation in which server(s) 150 function as a host computer that hosts gameplay between other devices, such as computer system(s) 110. FIG. 1B illustrates an implementation in which a given computer system 110 functions as a host computer that hosts gameplay between (or with) other devices, such as other computer system(s) 110. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the description of various system components may refer to either or both of FIGS. 1A and 1B.

[0056] System 100 may be used to implement various embodiments described in subsequent sections of the present specification. For example, system 100 may implement various programs that result in greater performance by the players, better satisfaction with the play experience irrespective of the level of skill, result in greater satisfaction/enjoyment by the players, and/or otherwise will lead to positive gameplay outcomes for the players. In one implementation, system 100 may include one or more computer systems 110, one or more servers 150, one or more databases 160, and/or other components.

[0057] Computer system 110 may be configured as a gaming console, a handheld gaming device, a personal computer (e.g., a desktop computer, a laptop computer, etc.), a smartphone, a tablet computing device, a smart television, and/or other device that can be used to interact with an instance of a video game.

[0058] Referring to FIG. 1B, computer system 110 may include one or more processors 112 (also interchangeably referred to herein as processors 112, processor(s) 112, or processor 112 for convenience), one or more storage devices 114 (which may store one or more applications 120), one or more peripherals 140, and/or other components. Processors 112 may be programmed by one or more computer program instructions. For example, processors 112 may be programmed by application 120 and/or other instructions (such as gaming instructions used to instantiate the game).

[0059] Depending on the system configuration, application 120 (or portions thereof) may be part of a game application, which creates a game instance to facilitate gameplay. Alternatively or additionally, application 120 may run on a device such as a server 150 to perform its designated function(s) for users in an "online" game hosted by server 150.

[0060] Application 120 may include instructions that program computer system 110, each of which are described in greater detail herein. As used herein, for convenience, the various instructions will be described as performing an

operation, when, in fact, the various instructions program the processors **112** (and therefore computer system **110**) to perform the operation.

[0061] Peripherals **140** may be used to obtain an input (e.g., direct input, measured input, etc.) from a player. Peripherals **140** may include, without limitation, a game controller, a gamepad, a keyboard, a mouse, an imaging device such as a camera, a motion sensing device, a light sensor, a biometric sensor, and/or other peripheral device that can obtain an input from and/or relating to a player. Peripherals **140** may be coupled to a corresponding computer system **110** via a wired and/or wireless connection.

[0062] Server **150** may include one or more computing devices. Referring back to FIG. 1A, Server **150** may include one or more physical processors **152** (also interchangeably referred to herein as processors **152**, processor(s) **152**, or processor **152** for convenience) programmed by computer program instructions, one or more storage devices **154** (which may store a matchmaking application **120**), and/or other components. Processors **152** may be programmed by one or more computer program instructions. For example, processors **152** may be programmed by gaming instructions used to instantiate the game.

[0063] Depending on the system configuration, application **120** (or portions thereof) may be part of a game application, which creates a game instance to facilitate gameplay. Alternatively, or additionally, portions or all of application **120** may run on computer system **110** or server **150**. Application **120** may include instructions that program server **150** to perform various operations, each of which are described in greater detail herein. As used herein, for convenience, the various instructions will be described as performing an operation, when, in fact, the various instructions program the processors **152** (and therefore server **150**) to perform the operation.

[0064] Although illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B as a single component, computer system **110** and server **150** may each include a plurality of individual components (e.g., computer devices) each programmed with at least some of the functions described herein. In this manner, some components of computer system **110** and/or server **150** may perform some functions while other components may perform other functions, as would be appreciated. The one or more processors (**112**, **152**) may each include one or more physical processors that are programmed by computer program instructions. Thus, either or both server **150** and computer system **100** may function as a host computer programmed by application **120**. The various instructions described herein are exemplary only. Other configurations and numbers of instructions may be used, so long as the processor(s) (**112**, **152**) are programmed to perform the functions described herein.

[0065] Furthermore, it should be appreciated that although the various instructions are illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B as being co-located within a single processing unit, in implementations in which processor(s) (**112**, **152**) includes multiple processing units, one or more instructions may be executed remotely from the other instructions.

[0066] The description of the functionality provided by the different instructions described herein is for illustrative purposes, and is not intended to be limiting, as any of instructions may provide more or less functionality than is described. For example, one or more of the instructions may be eliminated, and some or all of its functionality may be provided by other ones of the instructions. As another

example, processor(s) (**112**, **152**) may be programmed by one or more additional instructions that may perform some or all of the functionality attributed herein to one of the instructions.

[0067] The various instructions described herein may be stored in a storage device (**114**, **154**) which may comprise random access memory (RAM), read only memory (ROM), and/or other memory. The storage device may store the computer program instructions (e.g., the aforementioned instructions) to be executed by processor (**112**, **152**) as well as data that may be manipulated by processor (**112**, **152**). The storage device may comprise floppy disks, hard disks, optical disks, tapes, or other storage media for storing computer-executable instructions and/or data.

[0068] The various components illustrated in FIG. 1 may be coupled to at least one other component via a network, which may include any one or more of, for instance, the Internet, an intranet, a PAN (Personal Area Network), a LAN (Local Area Network), a WAN (Wide Area Network), a SAN (Storage Area Network), a MAN (Metropolitan Area Network), a wireless network, a cellular communications network, a Public Switched Telephone Network, and/or other network. In FIG. **1**, as well as in other drawing Figures, different numbers of entities than those depicted may be used. Furthermore, according to various implementations, the components described herein may be implemented in hardware and/or software that configure hardware.

[0069] The various databases **160** described herein may be, include, or interface to, for example, an Oracle™ relational database sold commercially by Oracle Corporation. Other databases, such as Informix™, DB2 (Database 2) or other data storage, including file-based, or query formats, platforms, or resources such as OLAP (On Line Analytical Processing), SQL (Structured Query Language), a SAN (storage area network), Microsoft Access™ or others may also be used, incorporated, or accessed. The database may comprise one or more such databases that reside in one or more physical devices and in one or more physical locations. The database may store a plurality of types of data and/or files and associated data or file descriptions, administrative information, or any other data.

[0070] FIG. **2A** illustrates an exemplary system configuration **200A** in which a server hosts a plurality of computer devices to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification. In one implementation, one or more servers **150** (illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B) may host a number of computer systems **110** (illustrated as computer systems **110A**, **110B**, . . . , **110N**) via a network **102**. Each computer system **110** may include one or more peripherals (illustrated as peripherals **140A**, **140B**, . . . , **140N**). In this manner, one or more servers **150** may facilitate the gameplay of different players using different computer systems **110** and/or otherwise provide one or more operations of application **120** (illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B).

[0071] In some instances, a given server **150** may be associated with a proprietary gameplay network system, such as, without limitation, the Sony PlayStation® Network, Microsoft Xbox Live®, and/or any other gameplay network system. In this implementation, a given computer system **110** may be associated with a particular type of gaming console. Other types of computer systems **110** using other types of gameplay networks may be used as well.

6

[0072] FIG. 2B illustrates an exemplary system configuration 200B in which a plurality of computer systems 110 are networked together to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification. Any one or more of the computer devices 110 may serve as a host and/or otherwise provide one or more operations of application 120 (illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B).

[0073] FIG. 2C illustrates an exemplary system configuration 200C in which a computer system 110 is used by a plurality of users to facilitate a multiplayer game, according to an implementation of the present specification. In an implementation, computer system 110 may be considered to host the multiplayer game and/or otherwise provide one or more operations of application 120 (illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B).

[0074] Referring to FIGS. 2A-2C, simultaneously, in an implementation, a host may facilitate the multiplayer game by dynamically modifying the gaming environment and/or gaming parameters to suit the skill levels of one or more players within a gaming session, measuring a team's performance in a gaming session, using likeability factors between players as a factor to perform matchmaking, using social groups to modify gaming environments and/or gaming parameters to differently suit the requirements of each social group, and/or performing other operations described herein. In an implementation, at least some of these operations may also or instead be performed by one or more individual computer systems 110. Furthermore, the illustrated system configurations are exemplary only and should not be viewed as limiting in any way. Other system configurations may be used as well, as would be appreciated by those having skill in the art.

Content Customization Based on Player Skill Level

[0075] In a first implementation of the present specification, the system enables players of different skill levels to play together, in the same level of a gaming session, by providing players of different skill levels challenges tailored to their particular skill level. In embodiments, a multiplayer game environment is simulated by a computing system. The gaming parameters are adjusted within the gaming environment according to skill levels of the different players participating in the game. Adjustments result in each player in a team experiencing a different degree of difficulty or challenge while still experiencing the same content within the same level of the gameplay session and while still being able to cooperatively play as a team. In embodiments, the skill levels of the players are different for at least two or more players.

[0076] In an embodiment, a computer program that executes the gaming environment identifies a skill level of each player among the multiple players, and subsequently modifies one or more parameters of the game for each player amongst the multiple players. The skill level can be based on a variety of factors, including experience level, achievement within a game, in-game performance statistics (e.g., kill/death ratio, win/loss rate, etc.). In an embodiment, the computer program that executes the gaming environment automatically detects and tracks a player's skill-level (tracked skill traits) based on measurable session behaviour, such as but not limited to: time played, successful games won, times helping other players, weapon accuracy, favorite weapon usage, and number of games left. In another embodiment, teammates can rate each other for various

subjective skill traits (assigned skill traits). The subjective rating could be such as but not limited to: expert sniper, great team player, and good leader. The computer program that executes the gaming environment may discern a higher skill-level for a player if the player has more votes for these traits in their career. In yet another embodiment, a combination of tracked skill traits and assigned skill traits is used to ascertain a player's skill-level. In an embodiment, each metric within the tracked skill traits and assigned skill traits are allocated weights in order to make balanced decisions.

[0077] The modification of the gaming parameters is based on the skill level of each player. In embodiments, the modification of gaming parameters is executed in real time during a gaming session. In embodiments, the modification of the gaming parameters are executed on a player-by-player basis, based on their skill levels, which may be different for different players. Therefore, the online multiplayer gaming environment generates a gaming environment within which two or more players can play cooperatively as a team within the same gaming environment of the same level of the same game and tailors the experiences in that gaming environment to the specific skill level of each player.

[0078] FIG. 3A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a player's skill level and modifying a degree of difficulty of a gameplay session based on the acquired skill level, in accordance with an implementation of the present specification. At 302, data corresponding to a skill level of each player in the multiplayer gaming environment is acquired. In an embodiment, skill levels of players playing together in a single session of the multiplayer game are acquired and are known to the computing system. In an embodiment, data defining the skill level of a player is acquired from a database where the data has been pre-stored at an earlier stage, for example, at the time of registering for a game play session. In embodiments, the data defining the skill levels is based on tracked skill traits, assigned skill traits, a combination of the tracked and assigned skill traits, or any other. In another embodiment, each user is prompted to enter their skill level by answering a set of pre-defined questions. In another embodiment, a skill level of each player is assessed via one or more test gameplay scenarios which the player is prompted to play, in order to acquire the player's skill level.

[0079] At 304, a predefined set of parameters in the gameplay session are modified, based on the acquired skill level data of the players. In an embodiment, before a gameplay session begins, the computer program that executes the gaming environment assesses the overall skill level of the team, based on individual players' skill levels. In one embodiment, assessment of the overall skill level is based on a flexible set of attributes. In one embodiment, the assessment is based on the game, on a particular level of the game, or specific attributes within a particular level of the game. In one embodiment, the assessment may be based on an average skill level of all the players for the game. In some embodiments, a combination of one or more of the above-stated embodiments for assessing the overall skill level is used. If a particular level favors a particular type of play style, for example, attributes favoring that level may be weighted more heavily. In an example of a basketball game, each position may be weighted differently. For example, the skill for the point guard position may be based on the player's passing and dribbling attributes, while the skill for

a center position may be determined based on the player's height, blocking ability, and strength.

[0080] Once an assessment is made, the computer program that executes the gaming environment modifies elements of the session and/or gameplay parameters as the session is being created based on the aggregate skill level. In embodiments, session modifications may include, but are not limited to: adjusting the number of enemies, adjusting the complexity of puzzles; and player adjustments, which may include the player's health, damage, speed, available abilities, and difficulty level. In one embodiment, a player's health is scaled based on the player's skill level by. At **306**, data corresponding to acquired skill level of each player is generated and presented to a player via a game console, resulting in each player within a team experiencing a different degree of difficulty or challenge while still experiencing the same content in the same gameplay session.

[0081] FIG. **3B** illustrates a table providing an exemplary list of parameters of a gameplay session that are modified based on a player's skill level and the corresponding experience for players of different skill levels. For example, in a first-shooter gaming environment, when a first player aims his weapon at a target, a parameter defining the tolerance for how accurate the player's aim must be to hit the target is modified based on the acquired skill level of the player. The computer assigns the tolerance for how accurate the player's aim must be to hit the target differently based on the skill level of the first player. A player having a higher skill level will be assigned a lower tolerance parameter and therefore, will have to be more accurate in aiming in order to hit the target. A player having a lower skill level be assigned a higher tolerance parameter and, therefore, could be less accurate in aiming in order to hit the target. As shown, column **310** of Table 1 lists modifiable parameters such as 'degree of accuracy required to hit a target', column **312** lists the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level, which may be 'high degree of accuracy required', column **314** lists the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level, which may be 'medium degree of accuracy required', and column **316** lists the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level, which may be 'low degree of accuracy required'. Similarly, the table lists other modifiable parameters, such as 'likelihood of being targeted by enemy', where the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level may be 'high degree of likelihood', the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be 'medium degree of likelihood', and the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level may be 'low degree of likelihood'. Another example parameter is 'difficulty of an in-game puzzle', where the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level may be 'high degree of difficulty', the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be 'medium degree of difficulty', and the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level may be 'low degree of difficulty'. Another example parameter is 'bonus chance of finding powerful treasure', where the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level may be 'medium degree of chance', the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be 'high degree of chance', and the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level may be 'very high degree of chance'. Yet another example parameter is 'number of challenging enemies in a single encounter', where the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level may be a high number, for example 10-20, the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be a medium

number, for example 5-10, and the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level may be a low number, for example 1-5. Still another example parameter is 'gold earned multiplier', where the earning of a player having a 'high' skill level may be 'high', for example 1.5×, the earning of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be 'medium', for example 1.25×, and the earning of a player having a 'low' skill level may be 'low', for example 1×. One more example parameter is 'friendly-fire damage amount to team-mates', where the experience of a player having a 'high' skill level may be 'high degree of damage', for example 100% of damage, the experience of a player having a 'medium' skill level may be 'medium degree of damage', for example 50% of damage, and the experience of a player having a 'low' skill level may be 'low degree of damage', for example 0% of damage.

[0082] One of ordinary skill in the art would understand that the skill-levels of players may not be on the scales listed above, but rather, any scale which quantifiably differentiates "high", "medium", and "low" by assigning a first value to high, a second value to medium and a third value to low, wherein each of the first, second, and third values are different and are quantifiably separated by an amount and indicative of a relatively high, medium, and low level of skill respectively. Furthermore, one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that the scale may be more incrementally divided into further categories, such as high-high, medium-high, medium-low, etc., each of which would be assigned a value, where each of the values are different, are quantifiably separated by an amount, and indicative of a relative difference in skill.

[0083] In embodiments, adjustments and/or modifications may be made for various play parameters during battles, healing, finding rewards, and other parameters. FIG. **3C** illustrates a table providing an exemplary list of parameters of a gameplay session that are modified differently for different experiences by players based on a player's skill level. As shown, column **318** of Table 2 lists topics such as 'Equipment Selection', column **320** lists how modifications under the corresponding topic of column **318** are made for players with higher skill levels, and column **322** lists how modifications under the same topic of column **318** are made for players with lower skill levels. For example, the 'equipment selection' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that involve access to numerous, complex equipment, whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may involve access to fewer, simplified equipment. In an embodiment, the term "equipment" may include to mean any resources that are made available to a player, which is used by the player to play the game. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes an "equipment" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a number and/or complexity of equipment, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a greater number and/or complexity of equipment and with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a lower number and/or complexity of equipment.

[0084] In another example, the 'accuracy of enemy attacks' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that involve 'enemy attacks never missing the player', whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may involve 'enemy attacks sometimes missing the player'. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset

includes an "enemies attacks" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with an accuracy of enemies attack, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a greater accuracy of enemies attack and with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a lower accuracy of enemies attack.

[0085] In yet another example, the 'accuracy of player attacks' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that involve higher or absolute precision in the attack to hit the enemy, whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may allow player attacks having a generous leeway and may not need great precision to hit the enemy. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes a "player attacks" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a required accuracy of player attack towards an enemy to be able to hit the enemy, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a greater required accuracy of player's attack and with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a lower required accuracy of player's attack.

[0086] In another example, the 'chance to find bonus treasure' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that provide a higher chance, for example 80% chance, on session completion, whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may provide a lower chance, for example 35% chance, on session completion. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes a "bonus treasure" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a probability of a player finding a bonus treasure, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a greater probability of finding and with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a lower probability of finding.

[0087] In another example, the 'frequency of hints given to player in a session' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that provide no hints, whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may always provide hints. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes a "hints" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a frequency of a player being provided with hints, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a lower frequency of hints and with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a higher frequency of hints.

[0088] In another example, the 'customization options' may call for modifications provided to high skill level players that a wide range of unique ways to customize character appearance, whereas, modifications provided to low skill level players may provide a limited range of ways to customize character appearance. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes a "customization" entry, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each skill level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a range of tools and options available to a player to enable customization of available resources including character appearance, with higher skill levels having values associated therewith a wider range with lower skill levels having values associated therewith a smaller range.

[0089] In another embodiment, the computer program that executes the gaming environment determines an average skill level of the entire team and subsequently assigns a skill-appropriate, pre-constructed, level session to the team. In some embodiments, the parameters of the gameplay session are averaged based on the aggregate skill-level of the entire team, such that each player is provided with a uniform session and/or gameplay parameters. For example, an aggregate skill level of the entire team is used to define a number of challenging enemies that each player will face in a single encounter. In this example, the number of challenging enemies may be modified to a number that is custom-calculated for the aggregate team skill-level and provided uniformly to each player. While in the previous embodiment, each player in a session is presented with a possibly different number of challenging enemies in a single encounter where the number of each player is based on their skill-level, in this embodiment, each player is presented with a uniform number of enemies in a single encounter where the number is based on the overall team average. Similarly, other session and/or gameplay parameters may be averaged based on the overall aggregate skill-level of the team.

[0090] FIG. 3D is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a player's skill level and modifying a degree of difficulty of a gameplay session based on the acquired skill level, in accordance with another implementation of the present specification. At 352, data corresponding to a skill level of each player in the multiplayer gaming environment is acquired. In an embodiment, skill levels of players playing together in a single session of the multiplayer game are acquired and are known to the computing system. In an embodiment, data defining the skill level of a player is acquired from a database where the data has been pre-stored at an earlier stage, for example, at the time of registering for a game play session. In embodiments, the data defining the skill levels is based on tracked skill traits, assigned skill traits, a combination of the tracked and assigned skill traits, or any other. In another embodiment, each user is prompted to enter their skill level by answering a set of pre-defined questions. In another embodiment, a skill level of each player is assessed via one or more test gameplay scenarios which the player is prompted to play, in order to acquire the player's skill level.

[0091] At 354, the acquired skill-level data for each player is aggregated to arrive at an overall skill-level data for the combination of the players. At 356, a predefined set of parameters in the gameplay session are modified, based on the aggregate skill level data of the players. In some embodiments, the parameters of the gameplay session are averaged based on the aggregate skill-level of the entire team, such that each player is provided with a uniform session and/or gameplay parameters. In an embodiment, before a gameplay session begins, the computer program that executes the gaming environment assesses the overall skill level of the team, based on individual players' skill levels. In one embodiment, assessment of the overall skill level is based on a flexible set of attributes. In one embodiment, the assessment is based on the game, on a particular level of the game, or specific attributes within a particular level of the game. In one embodiment, the assessment may be based on an average skill level of all the players for the game. In some embodiments, a combination of one or more of the above-stated embodiments for assessing the overall skill level is used. If a particular level favors a particular type of play style, for example, attributes favoring that level may be weighted more heavily. In an example of a basketball game,

9

each position may be weighted differently. For example, the skill for the point guard position may be based on the player's passing and dribbling attributes, while the skill for a center position may be determined based on the player's height, blocking ability, and strength.

[0092] Once an assessment is made, the computer program that executes the gaming environment modifies elements of the session and/or gameplay parameters as the session is being created based on the aggregate skill level. In embodiments, session modifications may include, but are not limited to: adjusting the number of enemies, adjusting the complexity of puzzles; and player adjustments, which may include players' health, damage, speed, available abilities, and difficulty level. In one embodiment, the players' health are scaled based on the aggregate skill level. At **358**, data corresponding to aggregated skill level for all the players is generated and presented to the players via a game console, resulting in each player within a team experiencing a customized degree of difficulty or challenge within a content in the gameplay session. The degree of difficulty or challenge, or any other game parameter is customized for the team of players, based on their aggregate skill-level information.

[0093] As a result, instead of having people of the same level teaming up, embodiments of the present specification enable people of differing levels to work together within gameplay. Therefore, even though the players may all be in the same environment, the various parameters that define death and success, among others, will change depending on the player's skill level.

Incentivizing Team Cooperation

[0094] In a second implementation of the present specification, systems and methods are provided to encourage performance of a team or a group of players. In embodiments, a computer-implemented method is used in a multiplayer gaming environment to monitor actual gameplay in real time in order to determine a degree of cooperation provided individually by each player to the player's team members, as well as an overall degree of mutual cooperation between all the players in the team. The team performance may be then determined based on a function of the individual and/or overall degree of cooperation among the players of the team. In an exemplary embodiment, the determined team performance may be displayed to the team players during the course of the game and/or after a gaming session and rewards or benefits may be distributed based thereon. In embodiments, the team performance is calibrated within a range or over a scale. In some embodiments, reaching certain thresholds of team performance could provide tangible in-game benefits such as but not limited to temporarily increased power, or access to new abilities. In some embodiments, a measure of team performance could be used as a form of currency that players or team members can use to purchase unique in-game bonuses or treasure.

[0095] FIG. 4A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of encouraging players of a team, who play together during a gaming session containing one or more levels. The team players are encouraged based on their degree of cooperation in the gameplay session, in accordance with an embodiment of the present specification. At **402**, a cooperation metric corresponding to each player in the team is determined. The metric may indicate a level of cooperation provided by a player to one or more other players for the benefit of the team. In an embodiment, a negative cooperation metric is determined against a team player who performs an uncooperative action during a game play session.

[0096] At **404**, an overall team metric is assessed. The overall team metric may be indicative of measure of a degree of cooperation among all the players in the team. In an embodiment, the overall team metric is assessed on the basis of individual cooperation metric determined for each player at **402**. In some embodiments, an overall team metric is computed as a sum of points, which may be benchmarked at different intervals during a gameplay session. At step **406**, a visual representation of the assessed overall team metric, assessed during a game play session, may be generated, as described below with respect to FIG. **5**.

[0097] FIG. **4B** is a table providing an exemplary list of actions, both cooperative and uncooperative, that may be performed by players of a team during a game play session and the corresponding cooperation metrics associated with each of the actions. As shown, in Table 3, column **410** provides an exemplary list of actions, both cooperative and uncooperative. Column **412** provides whether or not the corresponding action listed in column **410** was performed. Entries in column **412** may be marked as a 'yes' or a 'no'. Column **414** provides a cooperative metrics associated with the corresponding action listed in column **410**. In embodiments, advantages may accumulate for a team for each cooperative action and consequences may accumulate against a team for each uncooperative action performed by any of the team's players. In an embodiment, ten points may be allotted to a team for each cooperative action performed by any of the team's players. For example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'healing another player of the same team' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure is '+5', provided in column **414**, as shown in Table 3. In an embodiment, ten points may be deducted from a team for each uncooperative action performed by any of the team's players. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'sharing weapon with a team member' is 'No' and the corresponding measure is '0', provided in column **414**. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'saving a team member's life' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '+25'. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'killing a team member' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '−50'. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with an action where several team mates contributes to defeating and enemy is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '+15', which may be provided to each team member who was involved in the action. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'activating a coordinated team combo attack' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '+40'. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'completing level objectives alone' is 'No' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '0'. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'completing level objectives with teammates' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '+10'. In another example, the column **412** entry associated with the action 'complimenting, praising, or positive gestures to other teammates' is 'Yes' and the corresponding measure provided in column **414** is '+5'. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes

entries for various actions that may be performed, where the actions are indicative of cooperation between multiple players within a team. For each action performed, a corresponding entry may be created to indicate whether the action was performed in a manner that promotes team cooperation or vice versa. A value that contributes to the cooperation metrics may be assigned for each action that is performed. A different value may be assigned separately to one player or collectively to the multiple players of a team, based on that action and based on whether the performed action promotes team cooperation or vice versa. A positive value is assigned that increases the team metric, for actions promoting team cooperation; and no or a negative value is assigned that contributes negatively to the team metric, for actions that either do not promote or disrupt team cooperation.

[0098] FIG. **5** is a screenshot displaying an overall team metric in the form of a meter or bar. Team performance and/or the degree of cooperation may be determined by monitoring interactive behavior between team members during the game and within the gaming environment, such as, but not limited to, one player giving items to another player; one player healing another player; working cooperatively with another player to terminate an enemy; working cooperatively to solve a puzzle or overcome an obstacle, or any other behavior including but not limited to those discussed in Table 3. Positive team behavior may be rewarded in various forms. In an embodiment, a high metric (number indicated by team meter **500**) for overall team performance is rewarded with bonus points, additional weapons, or any other type of reward. If the opposite is true, the team meter may not change or may decrease. Different rewards may be associated with the team meter. In an exemplary embodiment, the team meter may be displayed to the team players during the course of the game and/or after a gaming session and rewards or benefits may be distributed based thereon. In some embodiments, reaching certain thresholds on the team meter may provide tangible in-game benefits such as but not limited to temporarily increased power or access to new abilities. In some embodiments, a measure on the team meter may be used as a form of currency that players or team members can use to purchase unique in-game bonuses or treasure. In an embodiment, rewards are disbursed gradually to the team members, where the entire team becomes proportionally stronger as the team meter increases. In alternative embodiments, rewards are disbursed immediately, where every time the team meter levels up, all teammates gain a powerful but temporary bonus to their weapon damage. In some embodiments, team meter rewards are accrued, where at the conclusion of a session, players can spend the team meter points to buy unique treasure, vanity outfits, or other benefits. Accordingly, a table, database, or other dataset includes entries for various threshold levels that may be achieved over a team meter, wherein a different value is separately assigned to each threshold level and wherein each of the different values is associated with a reward or a set of rewards for the team.

Improved Player Matching

[0099] In a third implementation of the present specification, systems and methods are provided to match players on the basis of common interests that encourage entertainment and therefore an ability of players to like the gaming environment. As used herein, the term "match" refers to a matching of two or more players, rather than a contest. For example, a potential match refers to a potential grouping of two or more players. Players are matched with people they've had fun with to nurture gaming friendships. The embodiments of the present specification offer player matching based on subjective variables, such as fun or likeability, so that habitual play may be encouraged and player retention is increased. The matching may be performed independent of other factors such as, a latency between players, a relative skill level, a presence of preferred players (e.g., clan mates or friends), a team composition, a time that a given player has been waiting to be matched (e.g., in a game lobby), or any other information used to assess a potential match.

[0100] In one embodiment, matchmaking is performed in real time at a peer-to-peer level through the use of a distributed application architecture. In this embodiment, the computer program in accordance with the present specification is programmed to match players who can potentially play a game together. In another embodiment, a central server is used to process and store matchmaking information. In some embodiments, a multitude of matchmaking servers that are geographically distributed within the central server architecture are used to process and store matchmaking information. The central server may be in communication with the one or more computing systems that deliver gaming environments to players. An application within a scoring engine in communication with the central server may obtain one or more match variables used to generate a match score for the potential match. In embodiments, a degree of likeability between two potential team players is used to determine a level of match between them. The degree of likeability may be in the form of the match variable that is based on at least two different types of variables. First, an explicit set of variables may be used to influence the match variable. The explicit set of variables may include, but may not be limited to, an indication of a positive thought or emotion towards another player. The indication may be provided in the form of a 'thumbs-up' sign by one player for another player, during or after a game play session, where the two players participated. If the player gives a 'thumbs up', then this is an express statement of likeability. In another example, pre-define keywords or phrases picked up from spoken/typed chats may be an indication of a positive thought or emotion. Some exemplary keywords and phrases may include 'good', 'you played well', and 'congratulations'. In another example, a survey may be conducted to probe interest of various players. Results of the surveys may be used to determine likeability between different players who took the survey. In yet another example, any other impressions may be identified by the system in accordance with the present specification, to analyze the interest of the players and use it to determine a likeability between them. Second, an implicit determination of the degree of likeability may be made on the basis of various tracked parameters. If a player quit the game in less than a predefined amount of time, one may assume less likeability. If the players opt for same or similar music, or music from the same artist/genre, to listen to while playing, an increased likeability may be assumed. If the players, opt to buy same or similar item from the game store, an increased likeability may be assumed. If the players choose to watch the same games/gameplay sequences in replays, increased likeability may be assumed. If the players cooperated, increased likeability may be assumed. In an embodiment, a reading from the team meter is used to determine the

degree of likeability between the players. If the players engaged in celebratory actions in the game or positive chatting, increased likeability may further be assumed. These variables can be used to adjust a matchmaking algorithm accordingly.

[0101] A given match variable may be assigned a coefficient that indicates a level of importance, or weight, of the given match variable. The scoring engine may generate a match score based on the match variables and their corresponding coefficients. In this manner, the scoring engine may consider multiple variables, each of which may be assigned with varying degrees of importance. In an embodiment, a score may be in the form of a percentage. A threshold score may be defined, which should be exceeded in order for a match to be indicated.

[0102] A game designer or others may assign a default value to a given coefficient based on the game designer's opinion of the relative importance of a corresponding match variable. The default value of a coefficient may be used unless it is changed. A coefficient may be tuned by changing its default value. Coefficients may be tuned in various ways, and by various parties, to respond to preferences, changing game conditions, and/or other information that may be available in real time during a gaming session. In this manner, the scoring engine may determine match scores based on dynamically changing information, and adjust the matchmaking process accordingly. For example, a player may tune coefficients by expressly indicating likeability towards another player during a gaming session. For example, a player may imply likeability towards another player by cheering them or engaging in positive chatting on a social media interface linked to the gaming environment during or after a gaming session. In examples, the likeability is determined towards any other player who may or may not be matching with a player in skills, gaming preferences, wait times, or any other information.

[0103] FIG. 6A is a flow diagram illustrating a method of determining a match between two or more players based on their explicit and implicit likeability metrics tracked throughout a game play session, in accordance with an implementation of the present specification. At step 602, implicit likeability metrics between a first player and one or more other players corresponding to actions denoting likeability among the players during a gameplay session, are tracked. In embodiments, various actions/behavior of the first player during a game play session may be used to determine implicit likeability of the first player towards one or more players in the session.

[0104] FIG. 6B is a table providing a list of exemplary player action of a player during a gameplay session that may be used for determining likeability metrics with respect to at least one other player. As shown in Table 4, column 620 provides a list of actions taken by a first player during a gameplay session with one or more other players; while columns 622, 624 provide a list of positive or negative implicit likeability metrics associated with each listed action corresponding to a second player and a third payer respectively. It would be apparent that Table 4 is only an exemplary illustration and that various other player actions as well as a plurality of other players may be added to the table without departing from the scope of the present specification. For example, column 620 lists an action taken by the first player of quitting a gameplay session before finishing the session and columns 622, 624 list a negative likeability metrics

associated with the action corresponding to both the second and the third player. Similarly, as column 620 lists an action taken by the first player of engaging in positive chatting during the gameplay session with the second player, column 622 lists a positive likeability metric associated with the action corresponding to the second player but column 624 lists a negative likeability metric associated with the action corresponding to the third player. As column 620 lists an action taken by the first player of co-operating with both the other players during the gameplay session, columns 622, 624 list a positive likeability metrics associated with the action corresponding to both the second and the third player. Further, as column 620 lists an action taken by the first player of engaging in celebratory behavior with both the other players during/or after the gameplay session, columns 622, 624 list a positive likeability metrics associated with the action corresponding to both the second and the third player.

[0105] At step 604, an overall implicit likeability metric indicative of a degree of implicit likeability between the first player and the one or more other players is determined by using the tracked implicit likeability metrics. In an embodiment, all the positive implicit likeability metric tracked between two players is summed to obtain the overall implicit likeability metric between the two players. In another embodiment, degrees of likeability may be recorder/listed in columns 622, 624 of Table 4 in terms of 'points', rather than just a positive or a negative metric. These points may then be summed to obtain an overall implicit likeability metric between two players.

[0106] At step 606, the first player is prompted to provide feedback regarding the player's gaming experience with the one or more other players at the end of the gameplay session. In an embodiment, the first player may be given an option of selecting a 'thumbs up' icon or a 'thumbs down' option to indicate the experience. In other embodiments, any other suitable method of taking player feedback may be employed.

[0107] At step 608 a positive or negative explicit likeability metric respectively, indicative of explicit likeability between the first player and the one or more other players is generated based on the positive or negative feedback received from the first player. For example, a 'thumbs up' icon selection made by the first player is recorded as a positive explicit likeability metric, while a 'thumbs down' icon selection made by the first player is recorded as a negative explicit likeability metric. In other embodiments, other actions of the player may also be used to generate the explicit likeability metric.

[0108] At step 610, an overall likeability metric indicative of a degree of likeability between the first player and the one or more other players is generated, by using the determined overall implicit likeability metric and the generated positive or negative overall explicit likeability metric. In an embodiment, a positive value is associated with each positive explicit/implicit metric obtained between two players, and the positive values are summed to obtain an overall likeability metric between the players.

[0109] At step 612, a match between the first player and the one or more other players is determined by using at least the determined overall likeability metric corresponding to the first player and the one or more other players. In an embodiment, one or more match making algorithms may be used to determine a match between two players based on their mutual likeability metric.

Content Generation from Social Networks

[0110] In a fourth implementation of the present specification, systems and methods are provided that create more meaningful social gaming networks by tailoring social content of the game based on ideas generated within the social group itself. In embodiments, a computer implemented method of integrating a social network into one or more gaming environments of a multi-player game is used to identify at least one social group comprising a group of players where the players have played together during one or more prior gameplay sessions of the multi-player game, customize content for each of the at least one social group, and provide customized content customized for a social group, to the players of the social group.

[0111] FIG. **7** is a flow diagram describing a method for implementing gaming social networks in accordance with some implementations of the present specification. At **702**, a computer implemented method of integrating a social network into one or more gaming environments of a multi-player game is used to identify at least one social group comprising a group of players where the players have played together during one or more prior gameplay sessions of the multi-player game. At **704**, content for each of the at least one social group is customized based on the data identified at **702**. At **706**, the customized content, customized for a specific social group, is presented to the players of the social group. The content may be customized in one or more of various methods.

[0112] A centralized social network tool may be provided that interfaces with and integrates into one or more gaming environments. In an embodiment, a central server communicates with multiple computing devices that provide the gaming environment to different players. In an embodiment, the centralized social network tool is implemented by the central server. The social network tool may be integral to the theme of the games and be pervasive within game play. In embodiments, members of the social network include actual players representing real people. At **708**, a comment or a note sourced by any one player of a social group may be fed to the display of other players within the same group. For example, a social feed of a friend is integrated into the display of one or more other friends, where all friends are a part of a social group. The feed may be provided during a gaming session. In embodiments, the feed selected for display may be based on metrics or events that are relevant to the social group. Exemplary metric or events that trigger a social feed may include, but may not be limited to, actions such as new weapons unlocked, levels completed, and new members. Additionally, in an embodiment, content of the feed is tailored based on trending interests or recurring behaviors within the group.

[0113] Groups may include sets of members that have a dedicated space within the virtual network of the gaming environment, for posting content and/or communications. These spaces may be private (e.g., only open to members who are a part of the group) or public. Groups' memberships in a given group may be reflected in the member pages of the members that are a part of the given group. Social feeds by group's members may be displayed during game's progression.

[0114] In another aspect, at **710**, the social network may be leveraged to obtain user feedback concerning game play elements. Content postings, member messages, and/or other interactions of members conveying information about gam-

ing elements, including, but not limited to, gaming characters, weapon types, special powers, treasure, or any other gaming element, may be monitored. In embodiments, if the game accepts one or more suggestions, modifications corresponding to the accepted suggestions may be made to one or more gaming levels. Further, in embodiments, accepted suggestions that were provided within a specific social group may be used to modify one or more gaming levels for that group only. Therefore, different social groups may have different content in similar levels of the game, making the nature of the social group very meaningful.

[0115] FIG. 7B is a table providing a list of exemplary user feedback elements during or after a gameplay session that may be used for modifying one or more gaming levels. As shown in Table 5, column **730** provides a list of user feedback provided by more players over a social network; while column **732** provides a list of corresponding modifications to gameplay. It would be apparent that Table 5 is only an exemplary illustration and that various other types of user feedback and corresponding modifications may be added to the table without departing from the scope of the present specification. For example, column **730** lists an element of user feedback that members are playing the same level repeatedly, and column **732** provides a possible corresponding modification in the form of incentivizing a new level by providing special rewards on completion of new level. In another example, feedback is detected in the form of a post from a member stating that the member has earned a new, rare special weapon during gameplay, and correspondingly a modification is provided by providing a higher probability to all other members to receive this same weapon. In another example, feedback is detected from one or more members who repeatedly fail a particular mission, and complain about it in messages and posts, and in response a modification is made where the mission becomes offered at a lower difficulty, with slightly reduced rewards.

[0116] In another aspect, at **712**, the game may rotate levels in and out of the game over time and differently for different social groups. Therefore, different social groups may have different levels available to them at any one time. In embodiments, gaming content is customized on the basis of characteristics of a social group. In embodiments, both the content and a sequence of one or more gaming levels of the multi-player game are customized. A combination of one or more group characteristics may be utilized to determine levels that may be offered to the group. In an embodiment, if a group is continuously struggling to complete a task or is finding the levels too easy, the social network tool may provide an indication, and correspondingly additional levels may be included and adjusted to a certain difficulty. In another embodiment, if a group has not used a certain game mode, used a particular item during gameplay, or relies too much on a particular strategy, the gaming content is customized for that group in the form of additional or modified levels with unique incentives and styles unfamiliar to the group. In another embodiment, if a group is lapsing or losing interest in the game, the gaming content is customized for that group by offering levels with highly unique and special rewards to retain engagement. In another embodiment, if a group member shares with the group an activity that they performed, the gaming content is customized for the entire group in order to suggest similar levels that feature this activity for other members of the group to attempt.

[0117] In another aspect, at **714**, game play snippets are selected from a level of the multi-player game played by players of the social group. In embodiments, the selected snippets are presented to the players of the social group. The selected snippets may be displayed after the corresponding level, of which the snippets are used, of the gaming session. In embodiments, the snippets are displayed when going between levels. In an embodiment, the snippet may be a wrap-up video that summarizes what happened in the last levels. The game may incorporate actual game play snippets, such as those corresponding to crucial moves by the players in the last level, into that wrap-up video. The game progresses differently for each group of players, making each social group's wrap-up video different.

[0118] The above examples are merely illustrative of the many applications of the system of present invention. Although only a few embodiments of the present invention have been described herein, it should be understood that the present invention might be embodied in many other specific forms without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Therefore, the present examples and embodiments are to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive, and the invention may be modified within the scope of the appended claims.

1. A computer-implemented method for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, the method being implemented in a computer having a processor and a random access memory, wherein the processor is in data communication with a display and with a storage unit, the method comprising:

determining, by the computer, a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players;

assessing, by the computer, an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, wherein the overall team metric is determined based on a function of all of the measures of the degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; and

generating, by the computer, a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

2. The method of claim **1** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team.

3. The method of claim **1** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game.

4. The method of claim **1** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game.

5. The method of claim **1** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

6. The method of claim **1** wherein the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team.

7. The method of claim **6** wherein the rewarding comprises providing at least one of bonus points, additional weapons, and game benefits, to the team.

8. A system for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, the system comprising: a computer having a processor and a random access memory, wherein the processor is in data communication with a display and with a storage unit, the computer configured to:

determine a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players;

assess an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, wherein the overall team metric is determined based on a function of all of the measures of the degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; and

generate a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

9. The system of claim **8** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team.

10. The system of claim **8** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game.

11. The system of claim **8** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game.

12. The system of claim **8** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

13. The system of claim **8** wherein the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team.

14. The system of claim **13** wherein the rewarding comprises providing at least one of bonus points, additional weapons, and game benefits, to the team.

15. A computer readable non-transitory medium comprising a plurality of executable programmatic instructions wherein, when said plurality of executable programmatic instructions are executed by a processor, a process for encouraging team performance in a multiplayer game environment in a game for multiple players where the multiple players form the team, is performed, said plurality of executable programmatic instructions comprising:

programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for determining a cooperation metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players;

programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for assessing an overall team metric comprising a measure of a degree of cooperation provided collectively by the multiple players that form the team, wherein the overall team metric is determined based on a function of all of the measures of the degree of cooperation provided by each player of the multiple players; and

programmatic instructions, stored in said computer readable non-transitory medium, for generating a visual representation of team performance based on the overall team metric.

16. The computer readable non-transitory medium of claim **15** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of items given by at least one player to at least one other player in the team.

17. The computer readable non-transitory medium of claim **15** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to defeat an enemy in the game.

18. The computer readable non-transitory medium of claim **15** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to overcome an obstacle in the game.

19. The computer readable non-transitory medium of claim **15** wherein the determining comprises determining a degree of cooperation extended by at least one player to at least one other player in the team to solve a problem in the game.

20. The computer readable non-transitory medium of claim **15** wherein the assessing further comprises rewarding the team based on the performance of the team.

21. The method of claim **1**, wherein the overall team metric is determined at different intervals during a gameplay session.

* * * * *